At the current rate of off-take it is expected that the present surplus stock of wheat above the buffer norms can be liquidated in the next three years.

(c) The Government has taken the following steps to utilize foodgrains over and above the buffer norms :—

(1) Increased allocation of foodgrains @ 25 Kg. per family per month under BPL.

(2) Reduction in Central Issue Price w.e.f. 25th July, 2000 and further reduction in APL prices by 30% during July, 2001.

(3) Offering of wheat and rice at rice lower than economic cost under open sale.

(4) Issues under various Welfare Schemes like Mid Day Meal, Nutrition Programme, Food for Work, Annapurna and Indigent people (Destitute Women & Children), SC/ST & OBC Hostel etc; at BPL prices instead of economic price.

(5) Wheat and rice are being issued @ Rs. 2/- and Rs. 3/- per Kg. of respectively under Antodya Scheme.

(6) Export of wheat and rice at prices lower than economic cost.

(7) Wheat and rice is also being issued under Sampooran Gramin Rojgar Yojana in the State of Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh sponsored by the Ministry of Rural Development.

PDS in rural and tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh

2644. DR. DASARI NARAYANA RAO : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) the measures initiated by Government for strengthening PDS in the rural and tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh; and

(b) the role being played by the State Government in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN) : (a) Government has undertaken a series of measures to strengthen the

Public Distribution System (PDS) in the country including Rural and Tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh :

(i) Based on the belief that truly democratic institutions do better safeguard food security concerns of all than the State bureaucracy, the Government has advised the State Governments to more substantially involve the Gram Panchayats in the supervision and monitoring of PDS especially at FPS level as a measure of social audit.

(ii) The allocation of foodgrains for the BPL, category was doubled from 10 kg. to 20 kg. w e.f. 1-4-2000 which has been further raised to 25 kg. per family per month.

(iii) To ensure smooth flow of PDS commodities especially in rural, remote, hilly and tribal areas, financial assistance is provided under 'Centrally Sponsored Schemes' 'Construction of Godowns' and 'Purchase of Vans'.

(iv) The States/UTs have been asked to actively involve the Gram Sabhas/Panchayat in the task of identification of Antyodaya beneficiaries.

(v) PDS Control Order-2001 has been issued indicate to maintain supplies and issue distribution of subsidised commodities to the targeted beneficiaries under the public Distribution System.

(b) As reported by Government of Andhra Pradesh, following measures have been initiated for strengthening the PDS in rural and tribal areas :

1. Sto[illegible] f each Fair Price Shop in rural/tribal area are required to be li[illegible] by the Fair Price Shop dealers in time leaving no scope for the sam[illegible] lapse.

2. Wid[illegible] publicity regarding the arrival/distribution of PDS stocks through FPS Shops is being made promptly.

3. The enforcement staff is paying special attention towards the distribution of Essential Commodities in rural/tribal areas.

4. As a measure to strengthen the PDS, the Government of Andhra Prade[illegible] introduced the coupons system through out the State which c[illegible]es that each coupon holder gets the essential commodities as pe[illegible]s entitlement under the Public Distribution System.

5. Instructions have also been issued to the District Administration to ensure uninterrupted supply of food grains during the monsoons, exclusively in tribal areas/hill areas and remote places.

National debate of Minimum support price

2645. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that he has called for a national debate on the minimum support price of foodgrains; and

(b) if so, the factors that have influenced him for this ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN). (a) and (b) The Government is examining the possibilities of providing alternative methods of income support to the farmers so that they get the MSP for their crops. However, this is still in the nascent stage and no concrete proposal on this issue has been finalized.

BPL families in Gujarat

2646. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE : Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is a fact that there are 21.20 lakh BPL families, as ascertained by the expert group methodology of Planning Commission in 1993-94;

(b) whether it is also a fact that on that basis Government of Gujarat receives monthly quota of wheat and rice for BPL families;

(c) the actual number of BPL families on the 31st December, 2000; and

(d) the figures of BPL families for which Government supply wheat and rice to Gujarat ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI ASHOK PRADHAN) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. There are 21.20 lakh BPL families in the State of Gujarat as per the poverty estimates of the Planning Commission for the year 1993-94 on the basis of population projections of the Registrar General as on 1-3-2000. Government of Gujarat is receiving the monthly quota of wheat and rice on this basis.